



The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild *Gazette*

Volume 25, number 2

March 2022

The next meeting of the Catskill Fly Tyers Guild is scheduled for Sunday, March 20, at 9:00 AM. This will be a virtual meeting. Barry Ord Clarke will be presenting the topic, “New techniques with traditional materials.” Zoom links will be emailed to all members before the meeting.



Hendrickson's Pool on the Beaverkill sleeps through winter

President's Message **By Joe Ceballos**

Greetings to all. It is a pleasure to address everyone so close to the start of another fishing season. The guild's annual business meeting that took place on February 19 was very productive. We had ample members present for a quorum, and they approved all of the board's proposals. There were no old business matters to be discussed. Our new business presented to the membership was a request to move forward on a new, modern website that would include a membership program, make it easier to manage new and renewed memberships, and to implement an improved email system. These modernizations

will make board members' tasks easier and certainly benefit the entire membership.

We have been very fortunate, after some searching and assistance from Tom Mason, to have found a webmaster committed to creating a new guild website. He is John Simonson, a longtime web designer and angler. John has also joined the guild as a member. His expertise will help us create a first-class website. The membership is encouraged to submit articles and photos for website content.

Special thanks go to Grant Holzworth. Many years ago, Grant created the domain name catskillflytyersguild.org and maintained it at his own expense. Recently, he transferred the ownership of that domain name to the guild. He deserves to be recognized, and will be given a lifetime membership for his help and contribution to the guild.

Our thanks go also to Fred Balling, who will be making a donation of some old Catskill flies. We await their arrival and will take pictures of the flies to appear in future issues of the *Gazette*. The flies will be archived and available for viewing to members at meetings.

As mentioned during last month's business meeting, the guild is looking for a new treasurer. Nick Mango is stepping down from his treasurer duties as of April 1, and we are seeking a guild member to become our next treasurer. We are sad to see Nick's departure as treasurer. He has done a great job for

the guild and has always been there for us when we needed him. We wish all the best for Nick as he moves forward. I'm requesting that members with interest in becoming our new treasurer contact me at sajefu@aol.com.

The guild's Fly Tying Rendezvous is back! All guild members are encouraged to attend and tie flies at the Rendezvous, which will be held at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum on April 23, 2022, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. For the first time, we will have a theme for the Rendezvous. The theme is Modern Catskill Flies, and there will be an established program to fit this concept. We are looking for tyers to volunteer and tie their versions of modern flies, as well as those wishing to tie traditional Catskill flies. Our goal is for this to be a tying and learning event. As part of the Rendezvous, Mike Canazon has volunteered to have a breakaway group in the rod builders shop to talk about cane rods in relation to the Catskills. There is much history relating to bamboo rods used for angling in the Catskills. We are also looking for one of our members to kindly step up and volunteer to discuss materials for another breakaway group on furs, feathers, and other materials that have an impact on tying traditional and modern flies. I hope that our entire membership is looking forward to what we anticipate will be a wonderful event.

The Cabin By Lois Ostapczuk



Lois Ostapczuk's The Cabin

Last November, I was commissioned by Peter Leitner—a guild member and active participant at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum—to do a landscape of a cabin that had ties to his family and Catskill fly fishers alike. About the same time, I learned that I had cancer—changing my life on a dime. While undergoing treatment, I was finally able to paint again, something that I truly enjoy, and I painted this landscape. With that said, my husband, Ed, with help from Pete, has unfolded some of the cabin's history for *Gazette* readers.

Pete and his family have deep Catskill fly-fishing roots, embedded along Willowemoc Creek. Pete's grandfather, Bert Leitner, was a member of the Beaverkill Trout Club prior to 1959. In the 1920s, he purchased property in DeBruce along the Willowemoc next to Charlie Ward that included the pools known as Anvil Rock and Sheeley.

In 1959, along with the late Bucky Sterns's older brother Dick and other anglers from Rockland County, he started the DeBruce Fly Fishing Club.

In the early 50s, Bert sold his original Willowemoc holding, which eventually became part of the DeBruce Club's water, and purchased a cabin on the south side of Willowemoc Creek at the Conklin Hill Bridge—Bendo Covered Bridge. Pete's grandfather owned the cabin until he passed away in 1968. Recent investigation, plus input from one of the Catskill "old-timers," suggests that Roy Steenrod stayed at the cabin, at least while he was teaching fly tying at DEC's Camp DeBruce conservation camp. It is not yet known whether Roy in fact owned the cabin and sold it to Bert. That is what a recent tip told to Pete indicates. A future visit to the county land records is planned this spring to confirm or deny that information.

At age five in 1962, Pete recalls catching his first trout under the Bendo Covered Bridge. And he informed readers that the previous owners (the Steenrods?) called their cabin "Cliff Dale," and his grandfather renamed it the "Royal Coachman" in 1952 when he bought it. On the property, there was a little spring-fed pond along the cabin where sometimes a few DeBruce Club hatchery brown trout found their way until being released into the Willowemoc in early autumn.

New York State eventually acquired this parcel, assimilating the property into their Forest Preserve. Then, the historic cabin was in complete disrepair as it painfully sank into the ground.

View more of Catskill artist Lois Ostapczuk's paintings by visiting:

<http://catskillwatersart.blogspot.com/2014/02/blog-post.html>

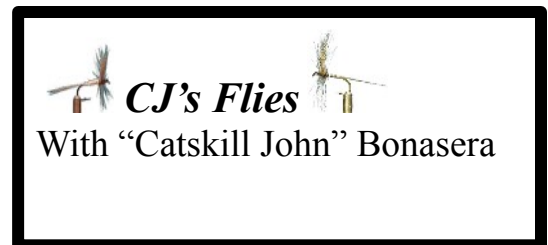
The Kill Series

By John Bonasera and Tom Mason

It has always been my opinion that as you become more infatuated with fly fishing, your desire to become a book collector will absolutely become your next hobby. This is even more true when your interest is "old fly fishing." In my case, I always wonder how it was in "the good old days." I wonder about the way streams looked, the gear past anglers carried, and the fly patterns they used. The old literature gives us a window back in time to read what it was like and the way it was done.

As far as fly-fishing books go, there are a few that stand out over the years as being known as a "must have" on your shelf. For me, that means that the book is on my bed stand—that's how important it is. Ray Bergman's *TROUT* has something for everyone, even if you're not a die-hard caster of mayfly imitations. His short stories and descriptions of his time on the water are conveyed in a way that anyone can understand. He tells of triumph and failure equally, something that we all go through ourselves. He fished the Catskills often, sometimes in places I am very familiar with, allowing me to enjoy my outings more, knowing that I might be standing in the same places where he once did.

Fortunately, *TROUT* was not his only book. He's got a few of them, and a close second to *TROUT* would be his less popular by far *Just Fishing*.



I think had Ray included dressings for the more detailed fly plates in *Just Fishing*, the book would have sold better. We all have the desire to replicate the flies we see either in books or on the stream, and when you can view the fly and look up the dressing, it makes the experience easier. It's also interesting to me how you can look at a seventy-year-old painting of a fly and simply have no idea of the materials used on it. I scrutinized over the dry flies of Bergman's "kill series" for a long time before coming up with what I thought were the proper materials he used, and I've tied them for years going by my handwritten notes that I keep in the book.

After Tom Mason posted one of the flies from the kill series on social media, I wondered where he found the dressing, as it differed from mine. He led me to an online source, written by likely the most famous *TROUT* reader and student, the late Don Bastian. For those who don't know, Don tied the complete wet-fly series, he framed them as they appeared in the book, and they were sold to a collector as a complete set. Those flies were on display at the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum for a week as they made their trip from Pennsylvania to their destination out of state to the buyer. And they were spectacular!

I tied three of the six from Bergman's kill series, and I'm including them here with Don Bastian's descriptions. Tom Mason tied the other three. Tom and I decided that because Don was the first, and likely the most skilled at deciphering dressings from paintings of flies, we should be using his dressings as the standard.



Paulinskill

Paulinskill

Tail: Cream
Body: White floss
Wing: Mandarin
Hackle: Ginger

Pinekill

Tail: Mandarin
Body: Gold tinsel
Wing: Mandarin
Hackle: Furnace



Pinekill



Bataviakill

Bataviakill

Tail: Brown
Body: Black floss
Wing: Mandarin
Hackle: Olive

Tom Mason adds:

In a followup to the guild's January meeting, in which there was discussion about the plates in *Just Fishing* by Ray Bergman, it was mentioned that the dressings for the flies were not included in the book. This was a frustration to me, because I had the same desire expressed by Catskill John: I had wanted to tie Bergman's kill series of six flies for quite some time. The series are flies all using the names of Catskill rivers. To my surprise, while enjoying the blog of the late Don Bastian, I found an entry in the blog about the book *Just Fishing*, in which Don gave his interpretations of these dressings. I felt that there was probably no one better to do this work than Don Bastian. The three sample flies that I have included are all due to Don's work in this area. I include the Bridgeville Olive, as we all know that Bridgeville is on the Neversink(kill).

Bridgeville Olive

Hook: Size 14
Silk: White
Pearsall's
Tail: Cream
Body: White silk
Wing: Mallard dyed
yellow
Hackle: Yellow.



Bridgeville Olive



Basherkill

Basherkill

Tail: Mandarin
Body: Gold tinsel
Wing: Mandarin
Hackle: Furnace

Walkkill

Hook: Size 14
Silk: Olive Pearsall's
Tail: Cream
Body: Olive silk
Wing: Mandarin
Hackle: Cream



Walkkill

Up on the Esopus



With Ed Ostapczuk

The Bomber and Alan Petrucci, Sr.

Though I never met Alan Petrucci, Sr. (1947 to 2022) in person, I was a frequent lurker on his lovely blog, *Small Stream Reflections*. At a minimum, on a weekly basis I'd check on his latest posts, to see where he'd fished, and what he'd used. His love of small streams—thin blue lines as they are known by anglers who scour topographical maps—was evident, as was his love of spiders, colorful streamers, and Fran Betters's Ausable

Bomber. His blog always captured the simple purity and joy of fishing small streams, and viewing it was akin to feasting on cozy comfort food: it just warmed a fly fisher's soul.

In 2013, Alan published a slim book titled *Thin Blue Lines* containing numerous colorful pictures of places, people, well-constructed flies, and brook trout—which he loved. The front cover reads, "A fly fisher's passion for small streams and wild trout." The back cover added, "The special feeling of taking a wild jewel from a cold, clean freestone stream on a fly is one of life's treasures." Amen to that! Bombers were featured within this book, in many photographs that had trout attached to that fly. Plus, a November 2014 entry on his blog featured Betters's dry fly in a post titled "Rough Cut."

As previously noted, I never met Alan, other than through his blog and book, but we shared a lot in common. I often frequent those thin blue lines for wild brook trout, myself. And I regularly call upon the services of an Ausable Bomber to do such. I was first introduced to this dry fly many years ago, by fellow guild member Wade Burkhart. We're both members of the Frost Valley YMCA fly-fishing club, allowing us access to unstocked brook-trout waters of the upper Neversink River. Wade would often seduce his summer quarry using a Bomber; it didn't take me long to do likewise.

Ausable Bomber

Hook: Mustad 9671, size 14
Thread: Hot fluorescent orange
Tail: Woodchuck
Rib: Brown and grizzly hackle
Body: Rusty orange Australian opossum
Wing: Fluorescent white calf tail, canted forward



Alan, may your Bombers catch many trout for you on your side of the great divide. Rest in peace my friend, your reflections will be sorely missed by those left behind.

Editor's Note: Alan Petrucci appreciated flies from the Catskill community. In particular, Alan was a big fan of the Cinberg, a pattern that was brought back from obscurity in large part due to the efforts of our very own John Bonasera. If you look closely at one of the two brook trout that appear in Alan's final blog entry in *Small Stream Reflections*, you'll see a Cinberg in the lip of a beautiful brookie. Please consider fishing an Ausable Bomber or a Cinberg for wild brook trout this season, and when you bring one of those jewels to hand, look up and give Alan a smile.

Meet Our Local Catskill Guides: Todd Spire

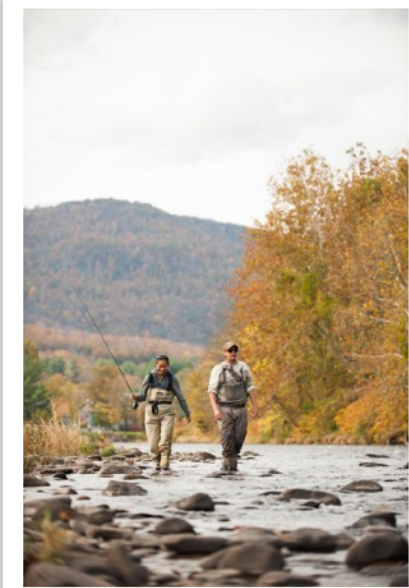
By Ed Walsh

This issue's guide comes from the eastern section of the Catskills, or what many in the guild might call "Ostapczuk Territory."

Todd Spire grew up in Ridgewood, New Jersey, and like many of us, he started fishing with a spinning rod. His early experiences were fishing the Saddle River near his home in Bergen County, with an occasional trip to Green Pond, where he caught his first fish.

Todd always enjoyed outdoor activities, but when it was time for college, he followed another passion by enrolling in the music and fine arts program of New York University. After a stop at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, and ending his college studies at Rutgers University, Todd began his working career in graphic arts in Manhattan. It didn't take long before he branched out on his own, opening a graphic-design business.

Shortly after leaving NYC in 2002, Todd found time to develop a community artists studio in Beacon, New York. He spent a significant amount of time in Beacon before moving to the Catskills in 2008, where he became interested in fly fishing. Todd joined the Ashokan-Pepacton Trout Unlimited Chapter and was befriended by Ed Ostapczuk and Mark Loete, both chapter board members at the time.



It didn't take long before Todd knew he wanted to pursue fly fishing as a career. He became active in his TU chapter and looked at business opportunities in that section of the Catskills. Seeing the sales of summer cottages and weekend homes grow, and knowing fly fishing was a draw to the area, he started to put a business plan together.

At one time, there were a couple of fly shops along or near the Esopus Creek, but those had closed. He recognized the value of that wonderful fishery and started to look at places where a new shop could be opened to service the folks who fished there. Putting his plan in place, he first became a New York State Certified Fly-Fishing guide and then found a location in Phoenicia, New York, for his future shop. The Esopus Creel Fly Shop was opened in 2018. As a business owner, Todd still finds time to guide former and new

Todd and a client walk the Esopus

clients, but says his time on the water with his eight-year-old son, Sidney, is what he values most.

During our conversations, he also emphasized his commitment to the conservation and protection of the area fisheries. Todd has served on the board of his TU chapter for well over a decade, and during this time he was involved in helping the Esopus become designated as a “Wild Trout Fishery.” This designation represents streams that support a population of naturally reproducing trout of sufficient size and abundance to support a long-term and rewarding fishery.

Todd is also an accomplished writer and photographer. His articles have been published in the Poughkeepsie Journal, and his photography has appeared in Eastern Fly Fishing magazine and won the Orvis “Best of 2017” Photo Contest.

I asked Todd if there was any advice that he leaves with his clients and patrons. His response: “Be patient, and realize if you are serious and practice you will become a better caster and in turn a better fly fisherman.”

With all guides interviewed in this column, I ask that a fly they developed, or use often, be included with each article. I think you’ll find Todd’s choice and its recipe an interesting addition. This fly is included as part of the Jerry Bartlett Angling Collection housed in the Phoenicia Library.

The New American

Hook: Daiichi 1260, 2X-long nymph, sizes 12 to 14

Bead: Black nickel

Thread: Brown

Tail: Pheasant tail

Abdomen: Stretch ribbing (Life Flex), brown

Thorax: Peacock herl

Flashback: Tinsel, pearl

Wing Bud: Antron, iridescent cream

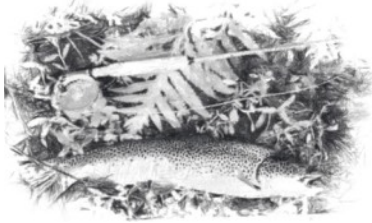
Collar: Hare’s wiggle dubbing, brown



Todd said: “I designed this fly after Hurricane Irene devastated the Esopus Creek in 2011. It’s a combination of the traditional pheasant tail mixed with New Zealand angler Gordon Hill’s simple and effective Nymphomaniac. The key to the tie is burying the flashback under the iridescent wing, which gets light bouncing between the two. This is a nice nymph when Eastern Catskill waters are running turbid. I use this as a dropper, and eighteen inches above it will use my adaptation of a Hare’s Ear. I fish a lighter-weight version of this as a dropper under a Royal Wulff-type fly as an indicator. This has worked in Montana, Colorado, Virginia, and of course, Pennsylvania and New York.”

Todd Spire can be reached at Esopus Creel fly shop: www.esopuscreel.com at todd@esopuscreel.com or by calling (845) 303-9466.

Casting Catskill Cane



With Mark Sturtevant

Hunter Killers

I have stated many times that the fishing season of 2021 was an unusual one. Upon further introspection, I have to say that is not correct, for upon each successive season I spend upon the bright waters of these Catskill mountains, I am impressed by the ever-changing patterns of nature. When it comes to the weather and the flows, or the temperatures and life of our rivers, I no longer believe that there is such a thing as a *normal season*. The season of 2021 was simply the latest variation presented to us to

comprehend, appreciate, and decipher, that we might find sport in the pursuit of the lovely game we know as fly fishing.

Spring flirted terribly early after an icy winter. Our great December snowstorm might have slowly replenished mountain springs and ground water over many months, but nature provided a brief, rapid warmup and rainfall to give us a flood, instead. As the weather turned cold again, reservoir flows were bottomed out while the ice thickened, and the specter of anchor ice promised more damage to our Delaware River fisheries.

When the spring hatches finally arrived, it seemed those worries were for naught, as we were treated to some wonderful Hendrickson hatches and excellent fishing. From that point on, though, the abundance of mayflies diminished markedly, and I noticed the habits of the trout begin to change. Where good wild fish would typically hold in choice lies and sip passing flies such as March Browns, Gray Fox, and Sulphurs, I found little of this activity on most days. Studying the water during long, patient hours, hoping for a burst of hatching mayflies, I observed a different behavior from the larger, more difficult trout that I seek. They became cruisers: or hunter killers.

Where I expected these fish to occupy discreet stations and sip quietly, I began to see more and more of them on the move in the middle of the day. Cruising large eddies, these trout would cover a wide section of river, rising very occasionally to sip what tiny flies were available. High winds were frequent, and I began to wonder just what these cruisers were finding amid the wealth of seeds, leaf matter, and detritus so evident to my eyes. It seemed early for terrestrials, and indeed my efforts to offer small ants and beetles were largely ignored. I eventually solved the riddle for a time.

One afternoon, while watching two or three large browns cruising and sipping from the wind-collected vegetable matter, I spied a minute fluttering, on a square foot of cleaner water securing a tiny caddisfly that was nearly drowned and trapped in the film. There were not many flies like that, just enough to bring a gentle rise or two from one of those three circling hunter killers every thirty minutes or so. There is a special fly I have tied for a decade now that is kept close, and I found a pair of size 20 variations tucked in one corner of a fly box. I fished it without floatant, for it had to be bathed in the film to bring a strike. The secret to the game involved spotting a cruiser and quickly casting ahead, hoping to guess the correct turns in his meandering course. Sometimes, I guessed right and enjoyed great satisfaction landing some of the trickiest wild trout of my career.

The cruising behavior I observed occurred in brief circuits. A big brownie would circle through a fairly wide expanse of water within sight of my location, and sip once or twice within casting range while meandering back and forth in a random pattern. I found myself lucky to get a cast to one of these fish before they vanished again. I enjoyed some success with the little caddis for a week, until the

availability of the sparse naturals waned. Then, it was back to staring at the surface, changing flies, and guessing.

There were days when I succeeded with a small terrestrial, though none proved as reliable as in previous summers. The tiny olives and *Pseudocloeons* that I often fish in summer brought no interest from these trout—there being a dearth of naturals available. The scarcity of insects seemed to make these fish super selective, while their cruising behavior tried to convince me that their feeding should be opportunistic and thus anything but selective.

The next strange, though blissfully happy occurrence, came on the June morning that I chose to debut my 4-weight Sweetgrass Pent. That was the miraculous hour I recounted in the January 2022 issue of the *Gazette*. A couple of days later, I brought two friends along to that same water. I found one riser for each of them, and we observed just a single *Cornuta* mayfly—the last that I would see for the season. In two days fishing, I had seen perhaps two dozen of the larger olive mayflies.

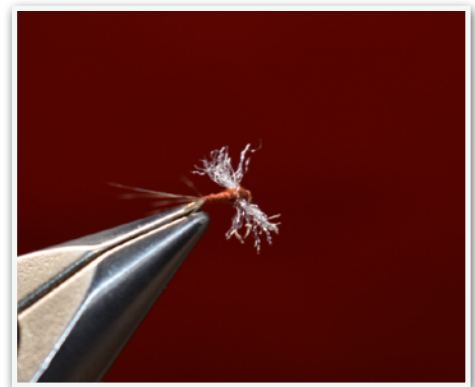
Though the small morning olives remained too sparse to interest the trout, I enjoyed a few mornings of trying—fishing with their spinners. The hunter killers were cruising again. Wading into the glare of the early morning sun prevented me from seeing them until they rose. My only recourse was to limit myself to a single cast to each rise, and only if I could make that cast within two or three seconds. After that brief interval, there was too great a chance of lining the unseen hunter, a lesson I learned the hard way on the first spinner morning.

The one-rise-one-cast game was complicated by the need to stalk slowly in wide pools of flat water. There were few spinners apparently, and the trout were covering a lot of water in their random meanderings. Knowing that each step might get me in casting range for the next rise, or might easily spook an unseen trout who happened to be coming toward me, truly heightened the tension of the moment!

As summer blossomed into July, I encountered a few sparse emergences of Sulphurs and more moving trout. On a rare day when a moderate hatch occurred, I found trout more agreeable to staying close to a lie. They still moved about in their feeding, but not with the wide ranging, random wandering that I had observed so frequently during May and June. When those few Sulphurs waned, I finally began to rely on terrestrials, continuing my role as the adaptable hunter. I hunted the trout when and where they hunted prey.

Haunting the mornings, I would stalk amid the stillness and search for any slight evidence of a trout looking for a meal amid the slim pickings available. With few if any mayflies, and virtually no caddis, I believed by that point the trout had to be willing to come for a mouthful. In a better mayfly season, a size 10 or 12 *Isonychia* dry fly can be a fine pattern to arouse these hunters, but I was not seeing *Isonychia* anywhere. As predicted, when I tried those flies, I found no takers. Terrestrials however, are where you find them.

A beetle is a typical choice, but did not produce that well this summer. Though a cricket or grasshopper pattern is ideal on many waters in my experience, my history with these flies on Catskill rivers has not been marked with great success. Nevertheless, I decided to put a preponderance of effort into changing that history. It appeared to be the perfect season to make that commitment.



The author's small rusty spinner



A brown trout that fell to a cricket pattern

A big terrestrial would seem the perfect weapon for trophy brown trout in a sustained hunter-killer mode. These trout had proven to me that they were restless and hungry, willing to hunt down their prey when the river failed to bring them their due. I simply chose to play to the situation.

High summer was a time of trials and victories. I had designed two new patterns in the beginning of 2020, and neither had really been fished here on my home rivers. Where grassy banks ran astride the river, the hopper was my fly, while the cricket ruled the woodland waters. I can no longer complain about poor success for these flies when fished in the Catskills.

I must admit that the scarcity of later season aquatic insects made the late spring and summer of 2021 seem ideal theoretically for terrestrial fishing. The relative lack of success with ants and beetles—the ubiquitous standby patterns—continues to puzzle me. Did some unique climatic event or feature effect the seasonal population of the natural insects? If so, I failed to discover it. It was certainly a high water year, with tremendous quantities of rainfall that led to high flows on the freestone rivers and higher sustained releases on the tailwaters. If anything though, more rainfall and higher flows seem likely to wash more ants and beetles into the rivers. Perhaps that was a factor, but only during the extreme flows when trout tend to hunker in protected lies rather than surface feed. Though I would love to solve that mystery, a resolution does not seem likely.

I hope that the coming season will be a very good bug year. I have missed the highlight of fishing to good hatches of Sulphurs, caddis, Green Drakes and *Isonychia* these past few years. I fully expect that fishing will be *different*, and that 2022 will bring us anything but a *normal* season. Change is the new normal it seems, at least over the past three decades that I have haunted these beautiful Catskill rivers.

Mark Sturtevant can be followed on his blog, *Bright Waters Catskills*: <https://brightwatercatskill.art.blog>

Me and Magoo By Chuck Coronato

How often do we think of fly fishing as something that comes with risks? It's easy to recite the litany of fly fishing's benefits, but we tend to dismiss the dangers associated with driving, wading, floating, and being far from medical services if we suddenly find ourselves in dire need. Anyone who has been fishing long enough has had their share of close calls, and those near misses are often at the heart of our go-to fishing stories. The physical gifts of youth may bail you out of a tight fix here and there, but aging teaches us that you need to use your head to sidestep pitfalls. It is often said that age brings wisdom; however, we know that's not always the



case—sometimes, age shows up alone—and whether it’s because of denial, pride, or just sheer stubbornness, you can find your mind writing checks that your body can’t cash.

Anyone who is familiar with the animated character Mr. Magoo knows that J. Quincy Magoo (voiced by Jim Backus of Gilligan’s Island fame) got himself into some dangerous situations, because he had terrible eyesight and was too stubborn to wear eyeglasses. He literally couldn’t see the danger coming. Because the cartoon was a comedy, Magoo, unlike real life, never got hurt and never had to face the consequences of his choices; he was blissfully unaware of the bedlam around him and had the good fortune to emerge unscathed every time. Some of the less perilous gags involved him communicating in a befuddled fashion with someone who wasn’t there, such as scenes in which he had conversations with lamp posts or hat racks, believing, due to his myopia, that those things were actually people. Based on his good-natured attitude and knack for getting into and out of trouble, I’ve come to think of Mr. Magoo as a sort of patron saint of anglers who blunder their way into and out of potential disasters. It’s a stretch to think that I’d ever mistake something like a lamp post for a person—but who knows—I’ve been prescribed thick eyeglasses since the age of five, and I don’t always make the best choices, so there’s often a need to put some faith in the luck of Magoo.

A number of years ago, my wife and I took a summer road trip to Tennessee, ostensibly to spend time with good friends who had moved to a small town just outside of Knoxville, but waders and fly rods were along for the ride, and I was anticipating my first opportunity to catch trout that resided south of the Mason Dixon Line. Tennessee’s oldest trout tailwater, The Clinch River, was nearby, and a conversation with a fly fisher from that area gave me the inside scoop on how to approach this fine water.

The Clinch is a trout fishery that exists because the famous Tennessee Valley Authority was established in the 1930s to generate hydroelectric power. The TVA controls the water releases that flow into the Clinch River from the Norris Dam. Those bottom releases keep water temperatures in the happy-zone for trout, but wading anglers need to be aware of the release schedule that is based on demands for electricity. Because this trip took place before the internet was chock full of information about hatches and water levels, it was necessary to make a phone call to hear about the timing of the current day’s schedule of generators. If one generator is operating, then fishing levels will likely be perfect. But when two or three generators are making power, you have to calculate how long it will take for the rapid increase in flow to reach the spot that you’re fishing—and get your butt out of there before the deluge arrives. The difference in flow made by additional generators is no joke, and if you ignore the schedule, you do so at considerable peril.

I carefully wrote down the generator schedule for the morning of my first outing. Making the call reminded me of the days when you’d phone a number to hear the recorded voice of Walt Dette reciting the expected hatches for Catskill rivers. On the morning that I was fishing the Clinch, there would be one generator operating until additional generators would begin at 11:00 AM. Based on my position downstream of the dam, I would have a two-hour grace period before the rising waters caught me, and I’d need to skedaddle out of the river no later than 1:00 PM.

Viewing the river from my car confirmed that one generator was indeed a promising fishing level. A steep path from a high bank led to a wide sandbar at the river’s edge. After wading several yards, I turned around to get a good mental image of the sandbar, knowing that this would be the spot where I’d want to return for the safest way out. Though the river was quite wide, the wading was pleasant, and you could cross to all of the good-looking holding water. I’d been given the advice to start with scuds fished

through riffles and around shoals, then look for rising fish when Sulphurs began emerging late in the morning.

Hookups were scarce during the first hour. It seemed that eagerness had gotten my day started earlier than the trout's interest in feeding, until several frisky rainbows caused my leader to pause and then streak through the water after the strike was made. Fighting determined 'bows is always a thrill, but the brown trout that later came to the surface provided me with some much-needed dry-fly education.

Rising trout were intercepting bugs lazily from the slick water with slower currents, and dead drifts were the only presentations to even get a look from the fish. The Comparaduns that I'd tied using orange beaver fur from a package of Mad River Dubbing seemed a close match in color for the hatching Sulphurs, but a number of browns would come up through the clear water, put their nose against the fly, and then drift downstream a foot or two with the bug before making up their mind. The takes that I got under those conditions were quite satisfying, and the rejections from the trout that flipped me off with a wave of the fin were frustrating, but I was fascinated by what was at that stage of my fly-fishing development a new game. This new game would eventually become my fishing addiction and be played again and again during countless trips to the Delaware River system.

I wanted to match wits and skills against those beguiling trout all day, but the hatch had come, as predicted, very late in the morning, and I had a long, upstream wade and the need to be out of the water before any sort of Noah's Ark scenario started to play out.

My timing was perfect. At 1:00 PM, I was roughly thirty feet from the bank when I saw the takeout spot at the sandbar where I'd started the day. As if the day hadn't been wonderful enough, I was treated to the bonus of one more rising fish between my position and the bank. The clock said that it was time to go, but I always get a serious case of one-more-cast syndrome when a fish is rising within reach, so I swept back the rod, felt the load, and made a presentation. The fly drifted beyond the fish without a take. A few seconds later, it rose again. I made another presentation—same result. I didn't want to end such a fine day with failure, so I looked at my watch to see if I had time to change flies, only to see that it was now ten minutes past the time when I should've been dripping dry and heading to the car. Looking to my right, directly upstream, I felt reassured by the sight of a person well in the distance and standing in the middle of the river. In the mist rising from the increase of cold water, I couldn't make out the presence of a rod, but there's something unmistakable about the posture of someone who's fishing, even when viewed from afar. I figured that if that person was able to stand in the middle of the river, then I should be fine for now. I changed flies, made a few more casts, and got no love from that rising fish. I was getting nervous. The water sounded louder, and was up to my knees, but I could still see the sandbar, and the person wading in the distance hadn't moved at all. I convinced myself that it was safe to keep trying for the lone fish that continued to rise. I changed flies again, and could hear the increasing rush of the water. I looked a bit to the left and saw the sandbar, then to my right to see the wading angler. Things still looked good. By the time I got the latest fly secured to my tippet, the sound was really getting loud, and the chilly river was flowing around the middle of my thighs. I looked for the fish, but it had stopped rising. "OK" I thought, "The water is getting too deep and it's time to go." I peeked at the bank for the sandbar—and it was gone. I glanced upstream and still saw the person. Then, my eyes focused. Wait a minute—that's not a person—that's a buoy! It was time to invoke the principal that the shortest path between any two points is a straight line, but what they failed to mention in high school geometry is that if your first step puts you chest deep in fast-moving water, then distance isn't your primary concern. My heart raced as I churned through water that was over my waders—some steps failing to hit bottom—and

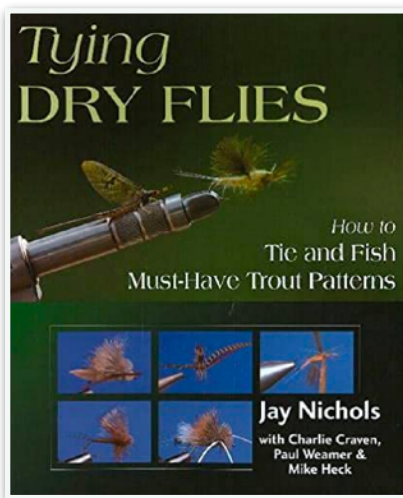
I threw my rod into sticker bushes on the bank so I'd have both hands to grab the thorny branches and pull myself out of the water.

It was the nearest that I'd ever come to drowning while fishing. I was shaking, my hands were hurting, and I was feeling (quite accurately) like an idiot who'd just risked his life to catch a fish. When I calmed down a bit, I took another look at that buoy in the middle of the river, and couldn't believe that I'd mistaken it for a wading angler. I cursed my eyesight, and then remembered my patron saint's catchphrase, "Oh Magoo, you've done it again!"

Book Review

Tying Dry Flies: How to Tie and Fish Must-Have Trout Patterns

By Jay Nichols, with Charlie Craven, Paul Weamer, and Mike Heck. Published by Stackpole Books, 2021: \$21.95 softbound.



Fly fishing may be about hooking fish, but it hooks fly fishers, too. That's what lies behind all those references to the stages of a fly fisher's life — not the rise and fall of Shakespeare's seven stages of man, from the infant, "Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms," to the corpse, "Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything," but an actual progression in which fly fishing lures anglers deeper into the sport's dimensions and promises. As the adage has it, we begin just wanting to catch a fish, then more fish, then bigger fish, then more difficult fish, until we realize we don't need actually to catch fish — the sport lies in fooling them. Along this arc, a fly fisher has the opportunity to explore multiple other aspects of the sport, and fly tying also hooks many of us.

These days, if you begin by wanting to catch a fish and have progressed at least as far as wanting to catch a lot of them, chances are you're a nymph and were first introduced to the sport during the era when Euro nymphing became the way newbies were initiated. Or perhaps it was older-fashioned indicator nymphing that you learned. Either way, that's understandable. If fly fishing is about hooking fish — and fly fishers — that's the most efficient way to do it.

Or rather, it's the most efficient way to do it most of the time, and the central theme in the progression of the stages of a fly fisher's life is that other values supplant efficiency. I've watched gonzo Euro nymphers who can vacuum up trout after trout from freestone riffles and runs stare in bafflement at the waters of famous spring creeks, where the aquatic vegetation that paved the stream came within inches of the surface. And committed nymphers may catch a lot of fish, but if they fish long enough, they see others happily catching fewer fish or even ignoring some fish to target others, and they realize there's something else going on—something they're missing.

One thing they're missing is the thrill of fishing dry flies to rising fish, and the generation that entered the sport during the rise of Euro nymphing is beginning to notice that. And once you get hooked on fishing dries, you're going to need to learn how to tie them, which requires skills well beyond wrapping flash on a beadhead jig hook and hitting it with UV resin.

That seems to be the premise for the reissue in paperback of *Tying Dry Flies: How to Tie and Fish Must-Have Trout Patterns*, a decision that says a lot about the state of the sport in 2021 and how publishers of the books that serve it see its future and hope to shape it. The book originally was published hardbound in 2009, and its republication now in a more affordable form bespeaks a belief that it has a new audience.

The book itself is not just a compendium of “must-have” trout patterns, which as Jay Nichols says in his introduction, ultimately is a matter of individual choice, however much such choices tend to agree, but a kind of “Greatest Hits” album of fly patterns and the essays that discuss them and how to tie and fish them, “lifted,” as Nichols says, “from books previously published by Stackpole Books,” where Nichols has had a long and distinguished career as an editor publishing authors whose work has influenced the sport. That’s the “with” part of the book’s byline. Nichols is responsible for some of the texts and ties, but in others, Charlie Craven, Paul Weamer, or Mike Heck has supplied the flies, fly-tying instructions, and step-by-step photos and sometimes the whole text, as well. In addition, still others, including noted fly designers John Barr, Guy Turck, and Harrison Steeves, have supplied material that Nichols has adapted.

The intention is to teach both the techniques required to tie a broad range of dry-fly styles and more generally how to think about, select, and fish them. But this is a tying book. Every book that claims to introduce tyers to the fundamentals uses specific examples to illustrate generally applicable techniques, and it’s how successfully they get from the one to the other that determines their value.

That’s where Nichols’s choice of his collaborators kicks this book up a notch. Craven, Weamer, Heck, and the others, like Nichols himself, are not just pros in the fly-fishing business, but skilled at explaining in print and in photos the sometimes arcane how-tos of fly tying. The patterns vary considerably in complexity, from Craven’s Mole Fly and Weamer’s Burke’s Emerger, simple dubbed-body emergers with CDC wings, to Weamer’s elaborate Truform Dun, with its parachute hackle positioned underneath the fly on a specially designed (Daiichi 1230) hook, and Turck’s Tarantula, with its spun deer hair and rubber legs. The complete list, though, indeed would give any tyer new to dry flies both an education in dry-fly techniques and, once these were learned by doing, a box of really effective flies to fish.

The book is divided into sections on mayflies and midges, caddisflies, terrestrials, and attractors, which in effect also cover stonefly adults. The first section starts where the modern American dry fly began, with the traditional Catskill-style dry and its upright and divided wings: a Quill Gordon tied and explained by Paul Weamer. As in many of the chapters that follow, there’s a quick but informative discussion of the origins of the fly. Then, chapters on the Adams and Parachute Adams teach hackle-tip and parachute winging styles, and as is also the case throughout, there are some interesting comments. Craven prefers to tie his parachutes with the concave side up, for example, keeping the body low in the water. Barr’s Vis-a-Dun is an unusual hybrid of hackle and Comparadun-style poly wing, and it sets the stage for tying the Sparkle Dun mutation of the Comparadun, distinguished by a technique Weamer uses for shaping the wing by tying it down in stages, producing a wing that is both completely flared in a half circle and durable. Then there’s a CDC Comparadun, a flat-water pattern that introduces working with CDC. A Green Drake version of the versatile and effective Harrop Hairwing Dun introduces that style of fly, followed by Weamer’s weird, but interesting, Truform Dun, the Craven and Weamer simple emergers, and the Quigley Cripple style of emerger. A Trico spinner introduces tying any kind of spinner, and the Griffiths Gnat concludes the section to cover midges, though Nichols says it “was not

originally tied to imitate midges clumped together,” as is usually claimed, but “to represent a subtle stage of the hatch between the migrating pupa and the adult, before the final escape from the pupal skin,” with the grizzly hackle as “a tiny bright halo.”

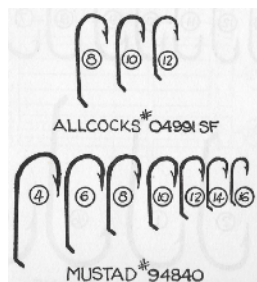
You can imitate pretty much any caddis adult by changing the size and color of any fly, and most of caddis emerge quickly through the surface film, so caddisflies don’t get the coverage here that mayfly imitations do. There’s just the X-Caddis, CDC and Elk, and Elk Hair Caddis, all proven patterns, but also mostly employing techniques already covered, although there’s a helpful discussion by Nichols about the selection of hair for hairwing flies. And to cover crippled emergers and exhausted egg layers, there’s a Smashed Caddis variation of the X-Caddis (or just an on-stream modification), with splayed wing fibers and no trailing shuck.

Terrestrials, however, are a widely varied group, and they get a lot of attention, not least because in terms of technique, foam enters the picture. Grasshoppers are represented by two patterns that couldn’t be more different: Art Shenk’s Letort Hopper, with its turkey wing and spun deer-hair head and collar, and Charlie Craven’s Charlie Boy Hopper, with its foam body, synthetic underwing, rubber legs, and CA glue construction. Nichols says that “many streamside observers have noted that while motion may be a trigger for the fish to take the hopper, imitating the legs exactly may not be,” so you can save the time and hassle of trying to imitate them. Yay. There’s a Fur Ant, Parachute Ant, and Foam Beetle—all basic patterns—the beetle with an origin story in which its supposed originator, Don DuBois, shows it to dry-fly theorist Vincent Marinaro while fishing the storied Letort Spring Run in Pennsylvania, eliciting a curse-filled deprecation of that “damnable rubber fly” that has been repeated by defenders of the use of natural materials ever since.

Interesting stories like this appear throughout, and it was news to me, when I came to the attractors terrestrials section, that the model for the gnarly Turck’s Tarantula was the humble X Caddis, which Guy Turck thought needed to float better and be more visible in rough waters. Craven’s tying step-by-step uses wraps of lead wire around the fly’s rubber legs to hold them out of the way when finishing the fly—a neat idea for tying any rubberlegs pattern. A Stimulator and a Foam Humpy with calf body hair for wings, the foam substituting for the deer-hair hump on the back, fill out the section. The Stimulator is tied by Craven on a straight-shank hook, which suggests a kinship with the Sofa Pillow, but Jim Slattery, who says he originated it, not Randall Kaufmann, claims he didn’t have the Sofa Pillow in mind when he designed it to imitate Eastern stoneflies in New Jersey in the 1980s. (Nichols still attributes it to Kaufmann.) As with the creation of the earth, the creation of fly patterns produces some conflicting accounts.

A fly fisher’s life goes through many stages. For anyone wanting to take the next step in becoming a complete fly fisher and a well-rounded fly tyer, not just a gonzo nymph, *Tying Dry Flies* offers a well-paved way forward.

—Bud Bynack



Post Meeting Report

The Catskill Fly Tyers Guild had a very successful meeting on February 19 that was attended by twenty-six members. The business portion of the meeting was followed by guest tyer (and guild member) Jay Lee, who presented from his home in Holland.

Jay's presentation was excellent and informative, and he answered members' questions about his tying and methods. After Jay finished, the meeting continued for some time with a lively discussion on various topics.

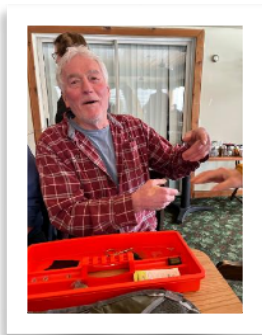
Some members wanted to obtain the proper silk for tying North Country flies. Tom Mason had high praise for Morus silk, which makes the same exact colors as Pearsall's. Here is one of the places in the United States where Morus silk can be purchased: <https://www.gunpowdercustomtackle.com/product-page/morus-silk-superfine>

Anglers Reunion Dinner

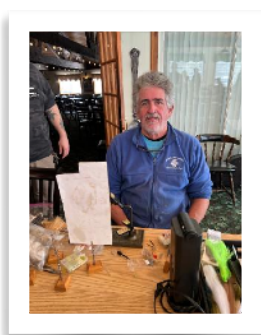
The Anglers Reunion Dinner will be held on March 31, 2022, at the Rockland House in Roscoe, New York. This long-standing tradition dates back to the 1940s, and was originally celebrated at the legendary Antrim Lodge. The social hour (hors d'oeuvres and cash bar) begins at 6:00 PM, with dinner starting at 7:00. A speaking program is planned. The program details are still being decided at this time. The dinner cost per person is \$35, which includes the tax and tip. To reserve a seat for the dinner, call the Rockland House at 607-498-4240 and give them your name and the size of your party.

Fly Fest Photos

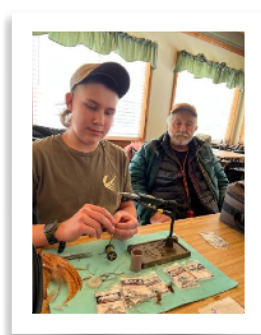
Several guild members participated in Fly Fest, which was sponsored by the Catskill Fly Fishing Center and Museum and held at the Rockland House on February 26. Here are a few of the usual suspects:



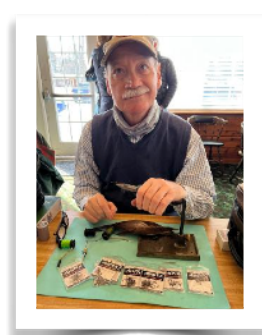
Mike Canazon



John Kavanaugh



Andrew Sanders, Al Case



Joe Ceballos

Do you have writing, announcements, or photos for an upcoming *Gazette*? Please submit them to the editor, Chuck Coronato, at coronato3@verizon.net. To join the guild, go to <https://cftg.limitedrun.com/>